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ABSTRACT

The development of specific university-level programs to prepare students for international employment or to enhance job opportunities in the United States can be achieved only through cooperation between foreign language departments and other departments. Foreign language educators and students must learn to relate to other fields, communicate beyond the limits of their own disciplines, and deal with the realities of other cultures. Curricular and pedagogical innovations in this area frequently fail because of lack of sustained institutional support, lack of faculty preparation time, faculty fears of new programs or procedures, and regression toward established programs. The possibilities for interdisciplinary course combinations or coordination for specific professions are substantial and varied. Proficiency-oriented language instruction and a multi-disciplinary, team approach to teaching are the most likely to succeed in giving students the needed skills and knowledge for the professional job market. (MSE)

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MORE OPTIONS FOR THE 80's: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY MODEL FOR TEACHING LANGUAGES FOR BUSINESS

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A frontier is a border that separates one group of people from another and must be crossed before interaction can occur. The word "frontier" is also used to describe uncharted territory where new ideas germinate. In addition, "frontier" suggests the most advanced achievement attained in a particular field of knowledge. Broadening your frontier of knowledge, understanding and achievement should not be thought of as a problem to be solved once and for all but rather as an ongoing intergral part of the educational process-- a "sharing", if you will, of ideas with others in a variety of areas of expertise. The development of specific programs on the university level to prepare for international employment possibilities or to enhance the job opportunities in our own country can be achieved only through cooperation between the foreign language departments and other departments across campus. The majority of students today are looking for an education that will provide them with career skills. Foreign language educators and students must learn to relate to other fields of endeavor, to communicate beyond the limits of their own discipline and to apply new modes of dealing with the realities of other cultures.

Career education is much broader than vocational education. It is a program which should help all students to understand themselves and to develop their interests, abilities and values. While it is partly learning about educational and training opportunities, career education is also a matter of viewing the whole person and seeing personal development as a life-long process, including accepting the need for retraining and re-education. It involves

making personal and career choices and becoming qualified for a career. All our young people need to develop saleable skills and those understandings and attitudes that make the worker an intelligent and productive participant in economic life. To this end, most of our College-level students need supervised work experience as well as education in the skills and knowledge of their occupations.

The connection between foreign languages and jobs in business and industry may not be obvious to those who assume that foreign languages are used only by translators, interpreters, and language teachers. With advances in transportation and communications and with expanding population and markets, the interests of more and more firms-- both here and abroad-- have become international and even worldwide. The economic independence of nations is irreversible, and neither large nor small businesses can afford to ignore foreign possibilities. It is true that English is the most widely used language in international trade, but it is far from universal. Today's undergraduate population is still as ready as it ever was to be challenged and provoked by the form and content of foreign language study. That to which students often react adversely, however, is the narrow grammatical perspective through which the foreign language is traditionally presented. Competence in dealing with a foreign language, particularly in the era in which we live, can only be achieved through the language's relevancy to the job market and its integration with other disciplines-- i.e., a comprehensive view of all its cultural manifestations and its direct application to a particular field of study.

It is only normal that we be reticent to abandon the sure knowledge of our academic specialty and hesitate to plunge into a field with which we are less familiar. But the traditional delimitations between courses no longer satisfy students, and a growing number of faculty are questioning their appropriateness. Indeed, if we really believe in our discipline as a pillar of the liberal education which we hope to offer our college students, then do we not also have the obligation to demonstrate its versatility and universality? Isolation and compartmentalization would clearly be counterproductive in this respect. The greater the number of associations made between foreign languages and other disciplines, the wider is the range of possibilities for it to assume its magnificent protean role. The combinations are virtually limitless for expanding and reforming departmental offerings. The versatility of the course possibilities outlined here lies primarily in the wide range of audiences to which it may be aimed. The broadest of these groups would be composed of non-specialists in foreign kanguages. Here, the course of study could be presented under the aegis of our language departments, or as a part of a general college humanities requirement, or as a special course offered in a residential college program.

PROPOSED SAMPLE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE CORE CURRICULUM:

FL Grammar & Composition
FL Conversation
FL Culture/Civilization
FL Literature (Readings & Textual Commentaries)
FL Phonetics & Phonology/Contrastive Structures of FL & English
**** INTERNSHIP: Research Assistant/ Teaching Assistant/
Study Abroad Co-Coordinator
Off-Campus Field Experience
***** INTER-DISCIPLINARY COMPLEMENT (Minor)

The national needs for increased productivity and a literate and well-trained populace puts an increase in the demands for relevant education and new educational approaches. In the coming decades, education must make significant changes in order to respond to these demands through reallocating funds, generating new capital and developing innovative educational approaches. A more intensified crisis in education is imminient within this time frame due to the inordinate slowness of market adjustment in terms of successful adoptions of product innovations and client demand identification (i.e., particularly in the area of current computer technology). The education area is currently suffering from conditions describable as a "discrepant market" (i.e., a market in disequilibrium) in terms of keeeping up with technological advances applicable to educational needs. As marketing strategy for the educational community, seminars should be planned between the community job market and the academic core of administrators, educators and students. Such interactive communications should be geared toward assisting in the analysis, planning, implementation and control of carefully formulated programs designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with the target market for the purpose of achieving organizational objectives. Such a strategy of constructive dialogue between the community job market and the educational system demonstrates an interest in designing course offerings with the needs and desires of the target markets in mind. In addition, such an effective means of open exchange informs, motivates and services both the target job markets and the educational community. Such seminars might prove instrumental in the long run in helping to set new educational standards, in opening the way for the consideration of new methodologies, and perhaps in coordinating currcula among

institutions.

As we have already seen, the goals of career education have expanded well beyond that of merely providing our students with a saleable skill. Some career education objectives can be stated as follows:

1. Students need to be prepared for the inevitability of change in themselves and in society during both youth and adulthood.
2. Students need information about themselves-- their values, interests, abilities and needs.
3. Students need to learn the characteristics of and requirements for various occupations.
4. Students need to learn how their own interests, abilities, needs, and values relate to the world of work and to specific occupations.
5. Students need various kinds of skills: numerical, communication, manual, perceptual, information-processing, decision-making, and interpersonal.
6. Students need positive attitudes toward work combined with effective work habits.
7. Students need to realize the dignity of all work.

A major problem in our educational system is the development of specific programs on the university level to prepare for those international employment possibilities. Part of this problem can be solved through cooperation between foreign language departments and the other department(s) in question. A difficult but not impossible task is to sit down with people from allied health, for example, and work out a sample student schedule allowing time for language and allied health courses. The second part of the problem, however, has to do with a more pressing question: exactly what sort of foreign language courses are most important to the language student wishing to major in social work or political science or economics or journalism or business?

Perhaps the "task analysis" approach to curricular reform can best answer this type of question. This approach involves tailoring courses and curricula to meet the specific future vocational needs of students. It implies a career-oriented emphasis in much of the liberal arts curriculum. In language departments, the "task analysis" approach finds its realization in the development of so-called "special-purpose" language courses designed to meet the needs for specific clientele. "Spanish for social workers" or "Spanish for law enforcement officers" are among the more popular options in this genre.

Why do curricular or pedagogical innovations so often fail on the drawing board or after only a relatively short period of operation? Let me suggest a number of reasons here. The emphasis is again on innovations in higher education, but many of the points are applicable to the secondary school as well.

1. A lack of sustained institutional support. Most innovations in curriculum or pedagogy require institutional support. The classroom faculty member alone is usually not in a position to decide upon or adopt innovative curricular goals or even to develop an innovative course without institutional cooperation. Such cooperation is often fiscal, but always needs to be attitudinal. Fiscal cooperation is facilitated by the existence of so-called "soft money," i.e., grants from educational agencies or foundations for the purpose of starting up an innovation. Innovation may also evaporate. Sustained financial support for innovation is not only increasingly harder to come by, but also institutions themselves are often expected to pick up the costs of maintaining a new program after the first year or two.

2. A lack of time for faculty to prepare. Changes in curricular or pedagogical procedures signify a change in the educational status quo. Any change in the educational status quo is likely to fail if the faculty have not been trained to deal with the implications of that change, and if they have not been given sufficient time to prepare themselves for the change.

3. Faculty fears of new programs or procedures. Many innovations in education are intimidating to faculty for a variety of reasons. Educators often get accustomed to certain set procedures and are loath to change. There is also in many minds the danger that a new procedure, if successful, could jeopardize one's employment. Electromechanical technology has been slow to become adopted in the classroom in part due to the fear of many faculty that they may be replaced by a machine.

4. The tendency of a regression toward the mean of established programs. The distinctive features of many curricular or pedagogical innovations have a tendency to become eroded by existing and long-standing programs and practices. After a short period of experimentation, innovative features are often tempered to reflect more closely the established practices and prejudices of the faculty.

Following is a listing of possible course combinations of an interdisciplinary nature which might be combined with the foreign language(s) with a specific profession as a goal orientation. Such suggestions are meant to attract students to the study of foreign language from a practical viewpoint rather than trap them in a foreign language requirement.

INTERDISCIPLINARY MODELS FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND PROFESSIONS:

FL-Economics-International Trade
FL-Political Science-History
FL-International Management-Foreign Relations/Psychology
FL-Allied Health Field-FL Culture/Civilization
FL-Marketing/Management-Economics
FL-Economic & Political Geography-Diplomatic Correspondence (Foreign Service)
FL-Money & Banking-Commercial Correspondence
FL-International Law-Diplomatic History
FL-Translation Technique-Linguistics/Diplomatic Correspondence

Other Combinations: Studies have been made of the incidence of various college majors to combine the following with foreign language skills (Ranked in order of frequency):

Business Asministration/Management
Marketing/Sales
Engineering
Secretarial Skills
Finance
International Relations
Accounting
Economics
Clerical Skills
Communications
Law
Public Relations
Advertising
Data Processing
English Language Skills
Civil Engineering
Journalism
Area Studies
Statistics
Psychology
Library Skills
Cultural Studies
Public Administration
Sociology
Political Science
Fine Arts

Proficiency Testing in Languages for Business.

A student cannot merely be declared to be competent in communication in a foreign language. The functions which he is competent to express must be specified. In the descriptions of proficiency in each of the four language skills and culture in the ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) guidelines, function, context, and accuracy are all interwoven. Judgments of an individual's proficiency, made by comparing performance with the descriptions, take all three factors into account. A proficiency-oriented program trains students to use the language outside the classroom, independently of the materials and activities of the course.

The one-solution method of the 1960's is reflected most dramatically in the proliferation of methods and approaches that developed in reaction to it in the 1970's: cognitive methodology, the confluent approach, total physical response, suggestopedia, the natural approach, individualized instruction, the counseling-learning model, the silent way, and finally, the eclectic method, which embraced none exclusively yet all generally of the above. Team teaching, the multi-disciplinary approach to languages with cooperative interaction with the business community must be the method of the 1980's and beyond at least until the close of the century.

In every endeavor in our society the knowledge of another language is invaluable. Students trained in foreign languages can enter professions related to government, business, social services, the arts and sciences, education and the media. At the same time, they are better citizens of the world because they are sensitive to other cultures and civilizations. Their training in foreign languages, increases their capacity for analytical thought, skillful writing and meaningful communication. It also enhances their appreciation of human values, develops their self-esteem, Since such people are the hope of tomorrow, we must begin their training in foreign languages today. Since the technologically-oriented world in which we live demands versatility and multiple skills in the job market, students with foreign language competency must combine their language ability with other appropriate skills.